

# Youth Will Build Future for Zimbabwe

YALI Network member Charmaine Picardo is a staunch advocate for sexual and reproductive rights. She hopes to establish a think tank in Zimbabwe for youth that addresses topics like women's rights and civic involvement.

"I want the think tank to be comprised of young people because we are going to inherit the country," she said.

Selected as a Washington Fellow, the young Zimbabwean wants to learn how she can raise funds to support projects in her areas of interest, which include the rights of homeless women.

Picardo stresses that she doesn't want to "wait for solutions that come from outside the country or from other people who may not fully be in touch with what is currently going on in Zimbabwe."

During her fellowship studies at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, Picardo also wants to learn how to effectively combine media and arts with advocacy to push for social change and community development.

"I hope to document young people's stories, challenges and solutions," she said. "The media is such a strong communication tool, and now with social media we can reach far and wide."

Currently a second-year student at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare, Picardo became an on-air voice at age 17 on the popular television show *Ndeipi Gen'a*, which focuses on youth activism and development. From 2011 to 2012 she wrote about reproductive rights for the *Herald Cool Lifestyle* newspaper, and in 2012 she worked as a community arts educator for the Arts Lab, a project targeted at youth.

In 2012 and 2013, Picardo was involved in drafting a constitution for Zimbabwe, and in 2013 she served as an election observer.

The youth want to learn "what is happening globally and get a chance to catch up on global trends," she said.

"We [Washington Fellows] will share and apply the knowledge we will acquire with other people in our countries as well as mentor others and actively participate in various areas to foster development."

**Photo credit: U.S. Embassy Harare**

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